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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

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Economics Division

GERMANY'S LABOR RESERVES: WOMEN

~~Report No. 70~~

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GERMANY'S LABOR RESERVES: WOMEN

I. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Manpower is the decisive factor for Germany's military position. Germany's ability to maintain 300 divisions in the field depends first upon the absolute supply of German men of military age, and secondly upon her success in finding substitute labor for the men taken for the army. There has been a general belief in Germany, shared by responsible Reich officials and by the leading economic journals, that large numbers of women not previously gainfully occupied could be brought into employment if needed. Statistics of employment published in Germany since the outbreak of war have seemed on the surface to justify these forecasts.

Actually, there has been little increase in the rate of gainful occupation of German women since 1939. The apparent increase is mainly due to the annexation of new territories and to the importation of foreign women.

Evidently the reserve of women labor was already exhausted by the summer of 1939. The work of maintaining the German household economy was already in 1939 a heavy burden upon the German housewives; under war conditions, this burden has been greatly increased. It has, therefore, not been possible to recruit any significant number of new women workers since the outbreak of war. The marginal woman has been worth as much in housework as in industry.

II. THE OCCUPATION OF GERMAN WOMEN: 1939 AND 1942

Of 80,000,000 persons counted by the German Census of May 1939, 40,000,000 were gainfully occupied; of these, 15,000,000 were women. Some 8,260,000 of the gainfully occupied women were classed by the census as Wage and Salary Earners. The rest were Family Helpers 5,500,000, Independents 1,000,000, and Officials 150,000. Fifty percent of all German women from 14 to 65 were gainfully occupied. In the United States, by contrast, less than 25 percent of the women from 14 to 65 were gainfully occupied according to the 1940 Census. 1/

The rate of gainful occupation 2/ among German women was thus extraordinarily high in May 1939 — twice as high as in the United States in 1940, a boom year. Furthermore, an exceptionally large part of the real national income of the German people depended upon the labor of the German housewives, who are not counted as gainfully occupied.

Nevertheless, in spite of the very high rate of gainful occupation among German women before the war, optimistic estimates of the available reserves of female labor have been made from time to time by German officials. Thus, Oberregierungsrat Stohtfang of the Reich Labor Ministry, in the May 23, 1941, Frankfurter Zeitung referred to the "great ready reserve of capable women" who had not yet been required because war losses had been so slight. Deutsche Volkswirt (May 1, 1942) puts the pre-war reserve at 4,000,000. In this country, M. I. S. is inclined to believe that a considerable reserve of women still remains: "Countless other women could be attracted by higher wages, bonuses, and other rewards."3/

The early estimates of large untapped reserves of female labor power seem on the face of it to have been borne out by the results. The number of female wage and salary earners covered by the Labor Office statistics increased from about 8,100,000 in the summer of 1939 4/ to about 9,400,000 at the beginning of 1942. 5/

1/ Series P-4, No. 8, p. 15.

2/ Rate of gainful occupation will mean the percent of women 14 to 65 who are counted as gainfully occupied.

3/ Greater Germany: Economic Appraisal, March 15, 1942.

4/ Wirtschaft und Statistik, 1st March issue 1941.

5/ Vierjahresplan, Nr. 1, 1942.

This enormous increase of 1,300,000 of women workers has generally been accepted in the United States as proof of the success of the recruiting program which the German government has carried out under the pressure of war requirements.

On examination, however, these figures appear to have quite a different meaning. They strongly suggest that the reserves of women labor in Germany were already exhausted by the summer of 1939. The estimated development since 1939 can be summarized in the following tables.

Table I shows the Gainfully Occupied Women of All classes. Table II shows the growth of the class of Women Wage and Salary Earners, and the sources of the increase. 1/

1/ The tables are based on Census figures; see Die Erwerbspersonen im Deutschen Reich. . . . Sonderbeilage zu Wirtschaft und Statistik, 1941, Nr. 19. The German Census and the U. S. Census count about the same groups as gainfully occupied; both exclude housewives. The German Census uses the following definitions of the Census social classes: A. Wage and Salary Earners is self-explanatory. B. Independents. Includes all persons who independently direct an enterprise, whether as owners, tenants, or employees. Managers and administrators of larger units are included as are officials and military men in leading positions. C. Family Helpers. Includes all persons who are working in an establishment directed by the head or another member of the family, provided that their relationship to the employer is not based on a regular wage contract. D. Officials' (Beamte). Includes all persons whose employment is based on public law rather than a private contract. The class includes civil servants of the Reich and local governments, teachers, social workers, streetcar conductors, policemen, firemen, the clergy, the military (unless classified as independent), etc.

The capital letters used are our own. These definitions are from Statistik des Deutschen Reichs, Bd. 453 Berlin 1936, pp. 117-118.

Table I. Germany: Gainfully Occupied Women
1939 & 1942

		May 1939	January 1942 1/	Change
A.	Wage & Salary Earners 2/	8,260,000	9,160,000	+ 900,000
B.	Independents	1,000,000	1,000,000	
C.	Family Helpers	5,500,000	5,330,000	- 170,000
D.	Officials	150,000	200,000	+ 50,000
	Total	14,910,000	15,690,000	+ 780,000

Table II. Germany: Women Wage and Salary Earners
1939 & 1942

Women Wage and Salary Earners, May 1939			8,260,000
Additions:	(1)	By Importation	300,000
	(2)	By Natural Population Growth	50,000
	(3)	By Internal Recruitment	550,000
		Total, 1939 area of Germany	9,160,000
	(4)	By Annexation	400,000
Women Wage and Salary Earners, January 1942			9,560,000
Increase, May 1939-January 1942			1,300,000

For convenient reference, the sections explaining the basis for the estimates in Tables I and II will be lettered or numbered to correspond with the relevant items in the tables.

1/ For the May 1939 area of Germany. Numbers estimated.

2/ Includes part-time workers. These figures are based on the Census figures for Wage and Salary Earners. The Census figure differs slightly from the Labor Office figure, because the former includes certain minor groups not counted by the Labor Office. The Labor Office figures were 8,100,000 women wage and salary earners in September 1939, and 9,400,000 in January 1942.

A. Wage and Salary Earners

1. The Recruitment of Woman Labor by Importation. In 1937-38 about 130,000 out of 380,000 foreign workers in Germany were women. 1/ Undoubtedly the ratio of women to men was about the same in 1939; out of about 500,000 2/ foreign workers 165,000 must have been women. By the fall in 1941 there were about 470,000 foreign women workers in Germany. 3/ Evidently there was an increase of about 300,000 in the number of foreign women included in the figures of women wage and salary earners.

There is no doubt that foreign workers are counted in the Reich Labor Office statistics. They are required to have Labor Books and to join the Sickness Insurance Fund. They are accordingly included in the Labor Office statistics which are based on Labor Books and on Sickness Insurance membership figures.

The inclusion of foreign workers in Labor Office Statistics is specifically noted by the B. M.E. W: 4/ Our own Consul in Bern also calls attention to this point. 5/ Nevertheless, considerable confusion has resulted from the double counting of foreign women. The Germans invariably count them twice; that is, they refer to the 1,300,000 increase in the number of women workers, and add to it the figure of 2,100,000 foreign workers, which was the total number of foreign workers of both sexes at the beginning of 1942. 6/ In order to appraise Germany's over-all labor supply position, and in particular to estimate the results of internal recruitment, it is necessary to make a distinction between foreign workers and German recruits.

2. The Recruitment of Woman Labor from Natural Population Increase. A small part of the increased employment of women can be attributed to the natural growth of the German

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1/ Statistisches Jahrbuch 1938.

2/ Reichsarbeitsblatt, 1941, Part V, p. 338.

3/ Ibid., January 1942.

4/ O. S. S. Accession Number 18255.

5/ 2207 from Berne, O.S.S. Accession Number 145490, pp. 5-6.

6/ See for example the Vierjahresplan Nr. 1, 1942.

population between 1939 and 1942. The Reich Statistical Office, in an extended analysis of the prospective development of the labor force, 1/ calculated that there would be an increase of about 100,000 in the number of gainfully occupied women between 1939 and 1942. Of these, about 50,000 would be wage and salary earners.

These women are a clear net gain to the number of German working women, and should of course be counted in an appraisal of Germany's labor position. In estimating the success of the campaign for internal recruits, however, natural growth should be discounted. The employment of these new recruits does not indicate any increase in the rate of gainful occupation of German women.

3. The Recruitment of Woman Labor from Internal Reserves. There evidently was a net recruitment of 550,000 women wage and salary earners from internal sources between mid-1939 and the beginning of 1942. This figure is arrived at by subtracting estimated increases from other sources from the total known increase of 1,300,000. 2/

This numerical increase of 550,000 women wage and salary earners does not, however, represent a corresponding increase in the German labor force. Part of the increase in wage and salary earners was at the expense of other classes of gainfully occupied women. Our estimates show a net loss of 120,000 from these other categories. The results of these movements are shown in Table I and the relevant discussion can be found under sections C and D hereafter.

Furthermore, the statistics include part-time workers; and to the extent that part-time work has increased, the real increment to the labor force will not correspond to the nominal increase. It is, therefore, of interest to attempt to estimate the increase in part-time employment of women. The increase in half-time is discussed in the April

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1/ Wirtschaft und Statistik, 2nd April issue, 1941, p. 153.

2/ The Germans mention the 1,300,000 increase (from 8,100,000 to 9,400,000) with pride; the increase is therefore not likely to be greater than that claimed. The German Ministry of Labor figures on employment of women are probably so far reliable.

1942 issue of Wirtschaft und Statistik, which remarks that while the average weekly hours worked by males has increased steadily year by year, the development for female workers runs in the same direction only up to 1938. Thereafter, average hours worked by females declined, in spite of the fact that large numbers of the fulltime women workers were working longer hours. The following table, taken from the April 1942 Wirtschaft und Statistik, shows this development.

Germany: Hours Per Week Actually Worked by Wage Earners in Industry

	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940
Male	47.2	48.0	49.2	49.6	50.4
Female	44.6	45.5	46.2	45.2	44.5

	Sept 1940	Dec. 1940	Mar. 1941	Sept 1941
Male	51.5	50.7	51.4	52.2
Female	45.0	45.4	44.8	44.6

The fall in the average weekly hours worked by women, in the face of increased weekly hours worked by a large part of the female labor force, can only mean that there has been a large increase in the number of part-time women workers. This is the conclusion reached by Wirtschaft und Statistik. The exact number of part-time women workers cannot be computed; but calculations suggest that the increase must have been about as great as the number of women recruited internally -- that is, from 500,000 to 600,000.1/ This estimate assumes that the majority of part-time workers are employed half-time.

4. The Recruitment of Women Labor by Annexation. An important part of the increase in the number of female wage and salary earners has undoubtedly resulted from annexation.

There were in the territories annexed from Poland, and newly included in the area covered by the Labor Office statistics late in 1941, about 5,600,000 persons.2/ In 1939,

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1/ For calculations leading to this estimate, see the Appendix.

2/ Wirtschaft und Statistik, 1940, 2nd June issue, 1st September issue, and 1st December issue; Bergwerkszeitung, March 1, 1942.

under the Polish regime, the number of wage and salary earners in these territories was probably about 1,000,000, and about 350,000 of them would have been women. 1/

These territories have, however, been under German control since 1939; and it is probable that considerable change has taken place in the occupational activity of the population in the past three years. The number of wage and salary earners will probably have increased considerably, largely due to the destruction of the economic life of the other groups of the gainfully occupied.

There is evidence that Polish proprietors, professional people, officials, etc., have been displaced in favor of Germans; and in all probability most of them have been forced into the ranks of the wage earners. Aside from this systematic displacement, we believe there would have been a strong tendency for employment rates to rise as a result of incorporation in the Reich. If the general German average (for 1939) were achieved, there would now be 1,800,000 wage and salary earners in these territories. It is unlikely that the employment rate has risen as high as the general German average, however. Among the Polish prisoners of war, there must have been a sizeable number of wage and salary earners from the regions later annexed by Germany, and of course the absence of these men would limit the number of workers who could be found in the annexed lands. The present figure therefore is likely to be nearer 1,000,000 — the number in 1939 under Polish government — than 1,800,000, the number which would correspond to the general German employment rate. A figure of 1,200,000 for the number of wage and salary earners in the Polish territories included in the Labor Office statistics cannot be far off. Of these, probably 400,000 were women. 2/ The number could not be put much higher than 1,200,000, and 400,000 respectively, without implying that there had been virtually no recruitment of German women at all.

1/ Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland, September 1939-June 1941. The Polish Ministry of Information, London 1942.

2/ Since women would not form part of the prisoners of war, the ratio of women to total wage and salary earners indicated by our estimates (400,000:1,200,000) is somewhat higher than the ratio found in Poland before the war.

B. Independents

Women classed by the Census as Independents constitute a diverse group about which generalization is difficult. There is no evidence or suggestion of any important changes in this class. This is natural, in view of the fact that the Independents are mostly of middle age or older. 1/ Furthermore, most of the Independents are peasants or proprietors of small establishments, and the mobility of such groups is relatively low. It is, therefore, probable that there has been no significant change in the number of women in the class of Independents. The number in May 1939 was about 1,000,000 and the number was probably about the same in early 1942.

The British M. E. W. apparently takes the same view; they estimate that in the first year and a half of war, there was no appreciable change in the number of women independents. 2/

C. Family Helpers

The family helpers were mainly engaged in agriculture (4,600,000). There were in addition about 550,000 female family helpers in Trade and Transport and about 300,000 in Industry and Handwork. The supply of family helpers differs of course from the supply of the other categories of gainfully occupied. The rate of increment to this class is determined largely by demographic factors; on the other hand, losses from this class can result from many different causes. There has probably been no substantial change in the number of female family helpers engaged in agriculture since 1939. But there has probably been a considerable reduction in the number of female family helpers engaged in Trade and Transport and in Industry and Handwork. In these sectors of the economy, most of the family helpers were working in small retail stores or other small enterprises which have lost a considerable part of their personnel to other branches of industry since the outbreak of war. Thus, a girl who in 1939 helped in her father's bakery might now be working in an armament industry. There would not be any source for compensating gains to the class of family helpers. This class as a whole has, therefore, probably lost considerable of its numbers to the war industries, where they appear as wage earners in the Labor Office statistics.

1/ About 50 percent of the women Independents were 50 years old or older in 1933. The same is probably still true. See Statistik des Deutschen Reichs, Band 453, p. 3/16.

2/ Enclosure No. 3 to letter to Mr. Despres, May 13, 1942.

The shift of female family helpers into the class of wage and salary earners was already noticed by Wirtschaft und Statistik 1/ in April 1939. The movement has undoubtedly continued, and probably has been accelerated. The Labor Book count of 1940 showed that since 1938, 14 percent of the skilled female sales personnel had left that employment. 2/ The movement of female family helpers from retail trade has probably followed the same lines. An estimate of a loss of 20 percent of the Family Helpers in Trade and in Industry would not be far wrong. This would account for about 170,000 workers.

D. Officials

There were about 150,000 women officials in Germany in 1939. The British M. E. W. estimated that by the beginning of 1941, they had increased by 50,000. 3/ Most of the women officials were, in 1939, working in the Post Office or in some branch of the Government Service (including teaching, social work, etc.). There were probably about 30,000 women officials in the Post Office in 1939. 4/ According to the Vierjahresplan 5/ the number early in 1942 was 45,000 — an increase of about 15,000 since the outbreak of war.

Scattered information on the employment of women officials in other branches of the Government service suggests that there has not been any significant increase since the beginning of 1941. Unlike positions in the Post Office, most of the other official positions which could be filled by women (such as school and Church positions) required some years of special training. It is probable, therefore, that the greatest increase in women officials was in the Post Office. The total increase up to the beginning of 1942 was probably of the order of 50,000.

1/ Wirtschaft und Statistik, 2nd April issue, 1939.

2/ Reichsarbeitsblatt, Nr. 5, Part V, 1941, pp. 85-93.

3/ British M.E.W., O.S.S. Accession Number 16655. May 13, 1942.

4/ Estimate based on 1939 Census. The Census classes are such that a precise figure cannot be computed.

5/ Vierjahresplan, 1942, p. 92.

III. THE INVISIBLE INDUSTRY: HOUSEKEEPING

The gainful occupation rate of German women has, therefore, not increased substantially since the outbreak of war. The reason for this paradox is in the fact that the German housewives were already carrying an extremely heavy work load in 1939 — a load which has become considerably heavier under war conditions. Although German housewives are not counted as gainfully occupied, a very large part of the real income of the German people has depended upon the arduous labor and superior domestic skills of these German women.

The introduction of war restrictions on consumption has resulted in an automatic shift of a large amount of work to the German housewives. Whatever "reserve" of labor existed among them was largely tapped right in the kitchen, by the device of shifting a considerable part of the work previously done by the consumers' industries onto the household economy. Lack of soap, lack of clothing, lack of fuel, lack of food, have all in part been made good by extra labor on the part of the housewives.

Germany had already in 1939 reached the point where withdrawal of women from household duties resulted in increased demands on the trades and services which were already short of workers. 1/ By the spring of 1942, the marginal woman was worth as much in housework as in industry.

But this does not mean that no further women will be displaced from housework to other employment. On the contrary, further war losses will probably result in a progressive redistribution of Germany's resources, in which the household economy will have to bear its share of the loss on the same basis as the other branches of the German economy. Part of the loss will probably be absorbed by the process we have described above, right in the kitchen. Another part of the loss to the household economy will take the form of actual shifts of women from household work to other branches of the economy, to make good in part the manpower losses suffered in the war.

1/ Die Reserve an Weiblicher Arbeitskraft Wirtschaftskurve, Heft 2, 1941, pp. 148-150.

APPENDIX: ESTIMATE OF THE INCREASE IN PART-TIME WORK OF GERMAN WOMEN

It is possible to estimate the order of magnitude of the increase in part-time work of German women from official figures of hours worked and estimates of employment increases. The official figures of hours worked apply only to industry; probably there was little development of part-time except in industry.

There were about 2,800,000 women wage earners employed in industry in Germany in 1939. By the beginning of 1942, this number had probably increased by 700,000 on account of internal shifting of women workers and increments from abroad. Meanwhile, average hours worked by women wage earners in industry fell from an average of 46.2 in 1938 to 44.6 in September 1941. The number of women workers thus increased from 2,800,000 to 3,500,000, while the total number of hours worked per week increased from about 130,000,000 to about 156,000,000, an increase of about 26,000,000 hours per week.

Part of the increased total hours worked was due to longer hours worked by full-time women employees in industry. Up to 1938, hours of work for women increased at about the same rate as hours of work for men. Since then, it is probable that the hours of regular full-time women employees have continued to increase at the same rate as hours worked by men. There is no doubt that the increase in women's hours of work has been substantial; this fact is mentioned repeatedly in the German literature.

If, as seems likely, women's hours for fulltime workers have increased by 2.6 hours per week (the average increase for men), that would account for 7,280,000 hours per week increase out of the total increase of 26,000,000 hours. The remaining increase of 18,750,000 hours is evidently due to the 700,000 wage earners above the 1939 number. This would be an average of about 27 hours per week per worker.

Evidently the number of half-time women workers must have increased by 500,000 or 600,000.

It should be remarked that the above calculations are based on a series of estimates, some of which are very rough. In some cases, the supporting evidence is inconclusive.

Nevertheless, the main point seems clearly established; and even a considerable error in the estimates would not be likely to affect the conclusions.

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